

1-1-1997

Depressed Thumb

Ken Waldman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/yr>

Recommended Citation

Waldman, Ken (1997) "Depressed Thumb," *Yalobusha Review*. Vol. 3 , Article 26.
Available at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/yr/vol3/iss1/26>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the English at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Yalobusha Review by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

KEN WALDMAN

Depressed Thumb

Because not even penicillin
could ease the infection or pain,
he buried the thumb in wet clay
for an hour, then popped the mottled
flesh with a squeeze, draining
a rich bloody pus that smelled
like the death of his mother.
The emergency room physician
who that night amputated
the half-inch of fingertip
told him that in another day
he very well might have lost
everything to the wrist.

The next weeks, as the mangled
thumb with its jagged black layer
of nail healed between bandagings
and soakings, he pronounced
that word *wound*, and knew
at last his lifelong diminishment
had surfaced. Discarding
the last of the gauze and tape,
peeling a final dented flap
of skin, he unveiled a shorter
stubbier right thumb, a thing
without print, a reminder
of what had been. And no longer.